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TAGS: [PTER](#) [PGOV](#) [KCRM](#) [KJUS](#) [IZ](#)  
SUBJECT: ABOUT BOMBS IN BAGHDAD

REF: A. 09 BAGHDAD 3184  
[1](#)B. 09 BAGHDAD 2883  
[1](#)C. 09 BAGHDAD 2294

Classified By: PRT Team Leader Tom Lynch for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

[1](#)1. (U) This is a PRT Baghdad Message.

[1](#)2. (C) Summary and Comment: Four major bombings have shaken Baghdad since the US operational military withdrawal from Iraq,s cities June 30. Despite the dramatic improvement in overall security in the province since the middle of 2008, these attacks accentuated strains in the relationship between the Baghdad provincial government and the security services. Although Iraqi law gives the provincial governor nominal authority over security in his province, the Baghdad Operations Command (BOC) has acted without meaningful coordination with the provincial government, underscoring the provincial government,s continuing lack of effective authority over Baghdad Province. However, the Prime Minister,s decision to rotate the top Baghdad security commander, LTG Aboud Qanbar, could lead to better coordination among his successor, LTG Ahmed Auda, the Provincial Council Chairman, and the Governor. While this new coordination is imperfect and has yet to be tested by another round of bombings, it is an encouraging sign. End Summary and Comment.

#### Blasts Rattle the Capital

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[1](#)3. (C) Baghdad was rocked by coordinated bombings four times in the past five months; August 19, October 25, December 8 and December 15. Each attack was directed primarily against national or provincial government institutions. (See reftels.) On August 19, two separate massive (7,000 plus lbs of ammonium nitrate) vehicle-born improvised explosive devices (VBIEDs) struck the Ministries of Finance and Foreign Affairs and reportedly resulted in 80 killed and almost 500 wounded. A third VBIED (also enormous at 8,000 lbs) was discovered abandoned near the building housing the Baghdad Provincial Council and Baghdad Governorate (its apparent target). Then on October 25 the PC and Governorate building was hit by another car bomb while an even larger VBEID devastated the Ministry of Justice, Higher Judicial Council and the Ministry of Municipalities and Public Works (both VBIEDs contained military-grade high explosives). Casualties were estimated at 93 killed and over 600 wounded (private Iraqi estimates run higher). The December 8 attack struck different Higher Judicial Council and Ministry of Justice facilities and two other sites and reportedly resulted in 52 dead and over 200 wounded. December 15 saw yet another coordinated series of bombings with much lesser effect, leaving one dead and five injured.

#### Provincial Reaction

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[1](#)4. (C) These attacks upset and frightened the populace and strained the relationship between the Baghdad Provincial

Government and the security services. Baghdad has unique security arrangements, both as the capital and because it has been the scene of some of the fiercest insurgent and sectarian violence in the country. All security operations in the province are under the aegis of the Baghdad Operations Command (BOC), an interagency organization housed in the International Zone that reports directly to Prime Minister Maliki. Although Iraqi law (most notably the Provincial Powers Law (PPL)) gives the provincial governor nominal authority over security in his province, in practice, the BOC has acted without meaningful coordination with the provincial government.

¶5. (C) Prior to the provincial elections in January 2009, US forces routinely briefed provincial government leaders on the security situation and ongoing operations. Subsequent to the security situation and ongoing operations. Subsequent to the seating of the new Provincial Council in April, these coordination meetings ceased as personalities changed. PRT Baghdad and Multi-National Division ) Baghdad attempted to facilitate a continuation of this briefing by the BOC, now entirely responsible for Baghdad security. However, arranging even an initial briefing proved remarkably difficult. In the aftermath of the August 19 bombing, a meeting was finally arranged for September 30 between the former BOC commander, LTG Aboud Qanbar; the Governor, Dr. Salah Abdul Razzaq; and the Provincial Council Chairman, Mr. Kamil Al Zaidy. However, intrusive ISF security checks and a lack of protocol-appropriate treatment at the BOC perimeter caused Governor Salah and Chairman Kamil to turn around in a huff at the gate.

¶6. (C) When the PC building was bombed on October 25, the bad relationship ruptured entirely. Not only did the day's attacks demonstrate that August 19 was not a one-off event, it killed dozens and wounded hundreds of Governorate and PC staff. The PC Chairman's reaction was immediate and furious; he demanded the dismissal of the BOC Commander, LTG Aboud, as well as Minister of Interior Jawad Boulani. The Governor's response was more measured, but he also called for dismissals. Notably, the third member of Baghdad's major governance figures, the Ameen, remained relatively quiet.

Nothing is Local  
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¶7. (C) The inability of the provincial leaders to dismiss the top security official in the province, despite their titular authority over local security, effectively demonstrated that national politics play a decisive role in local Baghdad governance. One reason that the Ameen his position) remained quiet is that he, like the BOC commander, is an appointee of the Prime Minister. (NOTE: Although the Ameen is a PM appointee, he is a member of the ISCI party, while the PC Chairman and the Governor are members of the PM,s Da,wa party. END NOTE).

¶8. (C) This lack of provincial control extends to other areas, such as service provision, funding, zoning and other putatively local functions. National ministries are responsible for most of the services that are performed by American cities such as police, education, health and electricity. Thus, provincial officials have limited ability to influence their provision. As officials who were elected in 2009, largely on security and good government platforms, the Provincial Council and Governorate,s inability to effect changes in these areas directly undermines their credibility. Their continued clamor for dismissals of the BOC commander and Interior Minister only underscored the reality of their lack of authority. They understood this. The clamor ceased.

¶9. (C) Comment: Theoretically, the ambiguity surrounding the administration of Baghdad should have been resolved via a constitutionally-mandated Baghdad Capital Law.<sup>8</sup> However, the very complexity and importance of the topic have

prevented the passage of this law for over a year, and will likely continue to do so for the foreseeable future. End Comment.

Hit the Road, Jack

¶10. (C) Following the December 8 attack it seems likely that the Provincial Government reached a quiet accommodation with the national government. The day after the explosion, the PM dismissed BOC commander LTG Aboud and transferred him to serve as Iraqi Army Chief of Staff. (COMMENT: LTG Aboud was not fired, and in fact, this is technically a promotion. He is a relative of PM Maliki, one a small number of high-ranking Shi,a in the Iraqi armed forces, and has a reputation for competence. END COMMENT).

A New Beginning

¶11. (C) The dismissal of the BOC commander appears to have ushered in a new era of provincial/national security cooperation. In a December 16 conversation with PRT Baghdad Team Leader, PC Chairman Kamil stated that the bombings on December 8 and 15 did not have the same political impact of previous events because the national government acted quickly in rotating personnel responsible for security. Further, the Chairman said he was the first to congratulate the new BOC commander, LTG Ahmed Hashem Auda, to his position, and planned to cooperate fully with him. He invited LTG Ahmed to attend the weekly Provincial Council meeting, which he did on January 6, engaging in a three-hour discussion on Baghdad security. The Chairman observed to PRToffs that t the new BOC staff has a &military8 as opposed to &political8 QBOC staff has a &military8 as opposed to &political8 viewpoint and that they are energetic and goal-oriented. Moreover, he was happy with the strong coordination promised. He views the changeover as an achievement for the provincial government.

¶12. (C) Governor Salah has also seen a positive difference, although he believes the BOC is still not fully cooperating. Two weeks ago, he met with LTG Ahmed at the BOC on ways to support security and stability in the capital. They have been meeting periodically since then, but in a conversation with the PRT on January 7, the Governor stated that he feels that the BOC is still not fully disclosing information that he needs to be engaged on, such as establishing or moving checkpoints in Baghdad. Further, he feels that the BOC generally disregards his advice and perspective on intelligence matters. Although progress needs to be made, he stated that the new dialogue and engagement are improvements to the situation existing prior to October 25th. As an example of positive movement, he cited a meeting he held this week at Muthana Airport with the BOC and U.S.to discuss the placement of aerostat balloons. He praised not only the effort itself, but also the improvement of institutional relationships.

Comment

¶13. (C) The major bombings of the past months resulted in real damage to the physical infrastructure of Baghdad,s government. They have had a deeply negative effect on the psyche of Baghdad,s citizens: damaging the growing sense of security, provoking fear of a return to the chaos of previous years, and undermining confidence in the government,s ability to protect itself and them. This effect has had real political consequences. However, one positive outcome is the increased coordination between the provincial and national governments. While this coordination is imperfect and has yet to be tested by another round of bombings, it is still encouraging. The provincial players are finding informal mechanisms to influence national issues and the national government is listening. As with much in Baghdad governance, the coordination is ad hoc and politically and personality based. Due to Baghdad,s unique status, it is unlikely that

it could be anything else. End Comment.  
HILL